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Vol. 13, no. 3:
The Critical Limits of Embodiment: Reflections on Disability Criticism
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Includes the following essays and artwork: Celeste Langan on public transportation, mobility, and disability; Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp on good parentage and good citizenship; Susan Schweik on reclaiming the “body” of Josephine Miles; Eli Clare on disability and queerness; Alexa Wright on self-portraiture and disability; and more . . .

In 2002

Vol. 14, no. 1:
New Imaginaries
Guest edited by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Ben Lee

Includes the following: Charles Taylor on social imaginaries; Arjun Appadurai on urban governmentality; Michael Warner on publics and modernity; Achille Mbembe on African self-styling; Mary Poovey on the history of “the social”; Ben Lee and Edward LiPuma on capital and cultures of circulation; Craig Calhoun on constitutional patriotism in Europe; Elizabeth A. Povinelli on the trouble of justice; and more . . .
Editor’s Note

The previous editor’s note observed that Public Culture has long been interested in the forms and circulatory paths of global culture. Over the last thirteen years, authors in this journal have sought to model how the various scales and forms of social space constitute a condition of that circulation. Many authors have focused our attention on the role that the nation and its others play in inciting or impeding new cultural and social forms. From the study of Hong Kong cinema to transnational capital to variously configured ethnoscapes, Public Culture essays have watched the borders of the nation harden and melt under the pressure of regional phenomena or post-, counter-, or transnational phenomena.

Authors in this issue examine how communicative media and communicative ideologies effect the circulation of cultural texts and, through this circulation, produce new forms of social imagination. The story the authors in this issue tell is not of displacement—new communicative media replacing the old—but of an increasingly mass- and multimediated world. Face-to-face circuits of gossip as well as machine-mediated analog and digital texts convey the news of the day, whether of a fire in a Biak, Irian Jaya, market (Danilyn Rutherford) or the weather outside the window shades (Marita Sturken). Bloomberg Television exemplifies the increasing cotemporality of forms of media. Television viewers are treated at once, and on the same screen, to various forms of mediated information: real-time infostreams, graphemes, human chatter. But these different media convey this news at different scales and different rates, and they figure social life from different perspectives. The Weather Channel utilizes satellite and mapping technology in such a way as to produce the weather as a global rather than simply a national
phenomenon. Political and social activists draw on and become ensnared in the promissory note of this old and new technology. Soviet and post-Soviet dissidents (Sergei Alex. Oushakine), gay activists in France (Eric Fassin), and those involved in democracy movements in China all utilize various communicative media to create a global address for their message. But as the essays in this issue richly demonstrate, these messages enter and cross cultural formations: For people in Biak, the circulation of money and stories about money are in part determined by the moral notion of the intimate stranger. For gay rights activists, public debates about same-sex marriage circulate transnationally but enter national traditions of democratic citizenship (in the case outlined here by Fassin, differentialist versus républicain traditions of the United States and France). Even within the same general cultural space, intellectual and political forms derive new languages as they move from the written to the plastic arts. As Mary Anne Case’s and Liz Deschenes’s pieces on bathrooms and bathhouses and Lisa Cohen’s interview with Lincoln Tobier suggest, critical theories of space unfold in unexpected ways as they themselves are legalized and spatialized.

But, lest we move too quickly to some form of technological determinism, Jodi Dean’s essay on cyberia suggests that various communicative technologies do not determine forms of communication. Rather, the technology comes to be seen as most suitable for a specific kind of communicative event—the personal letter for conveying the intimate interior; newspapers for public debate; and cyberspace for risk, uncertainty, deceit, and camouflage. In other words, not only are certain social registers imposed on cultural texts as the condition of their circulation across various types of social space (that is, texts in intimate spaces should be in an intimate register); the medium itself comes to signify one rather than another social meaning. Madeleine Doering Isom’s photo essay extends this point further by suggesting the place of imaginative visual citations in the formation of these networks of place.

Perhaps most important, the following essays continually foreground the fact that the communicative technologies on which social aspirations and social lives depend coexist and compete with other social facts. Digital switches may allow for a faster, denser stream of information, but, unless a person has a portal, that stream flows elsewhere—as does the commerce and advertising now attached to most browsers, and as do the extralocal images of what constitutes a good life that are attached to these advertisements. Even the prophet of computer democracy, Bill Gates, now recognizes that in many parts of the world fresh water,
medicine, and education are of more immediate concern for local people than whether they can browse the fashion of Paris designers. In this issue, Adeline Masquelier powerfully portrays the outcomes of these competitions for state and philanthropic attention.

In short, Public Culture has tried to foster an open approach to the question of what constitutes an instance of global public culture and what are its social conditions and social effects. As a result, the approach to cultural texts and social space has focused at times on social subjectivity (Cities and Citizenship, The Black Public Sphere), on textual mediation (electronic, new financial instruments), and on social scale and institutionality (ethnoscapes, transnationalism, globalization, neoliberalisms). Public Culture essays have aspired to move beyond contemporary representations of subjectivity and social space, not toward an irreal utopian world but ever nearer to the actual social world in which public culture is a socially contested and communicatively mediated effect. Getting to actual worlds has counterintuitively allowed authors to sketch the horizon of possible, even better, worlds.

—Elizabeth A. Povinelli
Sydney
December 2000
Call for Contributions

**miscellany, n.** a collection of various kinds, especially news clippings, literary extracts, postcards, and other images. Includes media accounts of items relevant to public discourse and debate throughout the world. The section seeks to highlight not only the reported phenomena as such but also the mediated nature of media coverage. *Public Culture* especially seeks pieces that are witty or (unintentionally) ironic. Submissions should include all relevant facts of publication and should be no longer than three pages.

**etymologies, n., pl.** true sense or form of the network of keywords: *public, publicity, public opinion, public sphere*. Investigates the contemporary uses and meanings of the terms *public, publicity, and public opinion*. Short essays (of approximately six to eight pages) that consider the semantics and pragmatics of one or more of these interrelated terms in the context of a particular language and a particular people are welcome. How do these terms compare across cultures and languages? Do their meanings “translate,” and what do their “mistranslations” bode for comparative social theory grounded in what may be hidden ontological statements about civil society?

**artworks, n., pl.** brief reports (up to 750 words) on innovative critical cultural work within and outside established institutions. Includes new kinds of museums; alternative or oral history projects; the expansion of musical performance and recording into forgotten musical histories or the dissemination of a broader range of musics; alternative publishing ventures or exhibition practices in film, theater, and dance; innovative cultural work with children; public art and art in public such as murals and graffiti; innovative uses of television, radio, or other mass media; and reports on past cultural work—the modernist, socialist, and avant-garde counterinstitutions of the early twentieth century. Send material and proposals to artworks editor Katie Trumpener.

**from the field, n., sing.** briefly annotated single photographs for inclusion as a photo feature at the end of the issue. Submissions are not limited by style or content but should be glossy prints of at least 5" × 7".

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**CyberSalon:** To join *Public Culture*’s on-line discussion group, send an e-mail message, “Add me to on-line discussion,” to public-culture-journal@uchicago.edu.

*Public Culture, University of Chicago, 1010 E. 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637; tel. 773-702-0814; fax: 773-702-9861; e-mail: public-culture-journal@uchicago.edu; World Wide Web: http://www.uchicago.edu/research/jnl-pub-cult/*
Controversies
THE WEATHER CHANNEL'S NEW FALL LINEUP

The Weatherlovers
A soap opera about a group of people so inhibited that they can only discuss the weather.

So, Fred do you think it will rain?

Undoubtedly, my darling.

The Barometer Bob Show
Barometer Bob tries to get people worked up about barometric pressure.

And in Chicago it was ALL THE WAY DOWN TO 28.1!!!

The Meteorological Gang
Four weather analysts discuss weather-related events of the previous week.

That was quite a hailstorm last Tuesday.

Cranky. I disagree.

Granny's Big Toe Report
Granny tells you what the week ahead will be like, based on her big toe.